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On Rewriting the Bible:



Catholic Biblical Studies in the '60s

Culture Wars

"No social progress outside the moral order."

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FIDELITY

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On Rewriting the Bible: Catholic Biblical Studies in the '60s

by Fr. Brian W. Harrison, O.S.

There is an old saying to the effect that history is written by the victors. The idea is that after a war has been fought, those, who, by emerging as the winners, succeed in controlling the present, can, in a certain sense, control the past as well. They can ensure that the dominant communications media will present the history of the recent conflict from their own viewpoint, depicting themselves, naturally, as the heroes, and the vanquished opposition as the villains. Indeed, it often turns out to be deliciously easy for the all-powerful victors to rewrite that history in such a way as to make it appear that their triumph was not only just and right, but also inevitable: they can depict themselves as simply having moved along on the crest of those great ocean waves of destiny which are supposed to be constantly sweeping human history forward in its inexorable progress toward ever higher levels of maturity, freedom, prosperity, and scientific enlightenment. Such rewriting of history, in short, can often be a powerful weapon in that 'culture war' against rationalist secularism in which Catholics have increasingly found themselves immersed over the last century.

Dr. E. Michael Jones, in a number of recent writings and lectures, has exposed the way in which the forces aligned against Christian moral principles made devastating inroads into American Catholicism — and thus into the broader culture — especially from the mid-1960s onwards. In reading and listening to Jones, I have been struck by a remarkable chronological parallel which has come to light in my research into the recent

history of Catholic biblical studies. For it was precisely in the same crucial years — from about 1962 to 1967 — that what might be called a rationalist revolution scored several stunning victories that gave it effective control of all the main Catholic institutions promoting Scripture scholarship, beginning with the very top: the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Catholic convictions consist basically of 'faith and morals'; and it looks as though the Enlightenment's cultural strategy of the mid-60s took the form of a two-pronged attack on both of these poles. Jones has been documenting the assault on morals, but the simultaneous assault on faith in those years, largely by means of undermining the credibility of faith's sources in Sacred Scripture, is a story which remains to be told. During and after that assault, the technique of rewriting history, especially via the ma-

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nipulation and selective quotation of Catholic magisterial documents, has played a major role in gaining and maintaining *de facto* acceptance for this revolution on the part of the Church's shepherds.

These events of the 1960s were by no means the first in which biblical studies played a role in cultural warfare. In another article published in this magazine, Beaumont and Walsh [CW, December 1996] outlined the way in which anti-papal trends in the study of Matthew's Gospel were fomented in German higher

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education as part of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* of over a century ago. But the present situation, is, I believe, still more critical; that is the main point I wish to make in this article. Indeed, I believe it would be hard to exaggerate the gravity of the situation which confronts us. The premise on which my paper is based is that over the last thirty-five years orthodox Catholic Scripture scholarship has not simply lost a major battle; it has lost an entire war. It has been devastated, and almost completely wiped off the map. Dissident, rationalistic, neo-modernist biblical scholarship has been firmly in control ever since the 1960s in nearly all the major Catholic institutions of higher learning, and is clearly insinuated (although not openly spelt out) even in recent documents of the Pontifi-

cal Biblical Commission, that august body of twenty or so top-ranking exegetes from round the world which advises the Church's magisterium on biblical matters. I will not spend time and space here giving documented evidence to justify this gloomy diagnosis of the present state of affairs; it is, as I say, a premise which underlies the rest of what I will have to say. My main point is that these triumphantly victorious liberals are the ones who have been writing — or rewriting — nearly all the available historical accounts of recent developments in



Catholic Scripture studies. And I wish to offer some critical reflections on this conventional reading of history.

Before going any further, however, I should define my terms a little more precisely. When I speak of 'orthodox Catholic Scripture studies' I mean studies governed strictly by that coherent body of magisterial teaching which has been laid down in the great biblical encyclicals of the last century, and by Vatican II's Constitution

on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* — interpreted, as it should be, in harmony with those encyclicals. Among the principal points insisted upon in this body of papal and conciliar teaching are the following. First, Sacred Scripture is free from error in all that the sacred writers affirm, *regardless of subject-matter*. Again and again the magisterium has insisted that no Catholic interpreter may dare to restrict biblical inerrancy to the kinds of affirmations which he thinks have some religious or 'salvific' value, while allowing for the possibility of biblical errors in other supposedly 'profane' matters; for, as Vatican II puts it,¹ *everything* affirmed by the human writers of the Bible is affirmed by the Holy Spirit Himself. That is precisely what the divine inspiration of Scripture means. Secondly, Scripture must be interpreted in accord with Sacred Tradition, in particular, the unanimous consensus of the early Fathers, and the declarations of the Church's magisterium; and thirdly, while the identification of the precise literary genres of some parts of the Bible may be legitimately debated, the four Gospels, from start to finish, definitely belong to the literary genre of history in the strong and full sense of that word. As Vatican II puts it, the Gospels "always" (*semper*) tell us "the honest truth" about Jesus, handing on "faithfully" what he "really did and said for our salvation until the day He was taken up."² When I say that orthodox Catholic Scripture scholarship has lost an entire war since Vatican II, what I mean is that you will now find very few Catholic theological faculties in the world where the Scripture professors clearly, consistently, and unambiguously uphold all of those three points.

I come now to the main theme of my essay, which I have subtitled "Demythologizing the Golden Legend." Here too a little explanation of terms will be in order. There is probably no single word that pinpoints more accurately the central problem in twentieth-century biblical studies than the word "demythologization." It is a word that first came into vogue in liberal Protestant circles, especially as a result of the radical, existentialist reading of Scripture promoted by the German exegete Rudolf Bultmann.

The central idea is that modern 'scientific' man can no longer accept literally the world-view of the Bible — a world-view which includes belief in supernatural and preternatural interventions in the world of our experience: visions, miracles, fulfilled prophecies, demonic possession and exorcism, appearances of angels bearing messages from Heaven, and so forth. If we find such phenomena incredible, are we then to abandon belief in

the Bible as God's Word? That might seem to be the honest and logical step to take — one which many atheists and sceptics have taken over the centuries. The demythologizing theologian, however, sees no need at all for such a drastic response to the insights (or supposed insights) of modern science. His proposed solution is that rather than *deny* the truth of Scripture, we should simply *reinterpret* Scripture. On the one hand, so he says, we should recognize that biblical accounts of supernatural intervention in the cosmos are indeed mythical, since modern science rules them out. On the other hand, these same accounts should be valued and appreciated for their deep spiritual significance: they should be understood as expressing, in the kind of literary garb that was appropriate for a naive, pre-scientific culture, profound truths about divine and human reality. The miraculous, supernatural 'language,' according to the demythologizers, is merely like an outer shell or husk, which needs to be broken and penetrated by modern Christians in order to draw sustenance from the fruit which lies hidden within.

I. INTRODUCING THE GOLDEN LEGEND.

There is much that could be said — and has repeatedly been said — in criticism of this kind of biblical exegesis, but my purpose here is not to concentrate on specific questions of biblical interpretation, but rather, to argue that those scholars within the Catholic Church who promote demythologizing interpretations of the Bible have themselves been busy producing a myth of their own — a myth which masquerades as the history of Catholic biblical studies, and especially of papal teaching on Scripture, over the last hundred years or so. Since this myth is a sweet-sounding story — a story of ever-increasing illumination and progress culminating in a blissfully happy ending — I have decided to call it "The Golden Legend." But for all its sweetness and light, it seems to me to distort both history and Catholic doctrine. Therefore, as the title of this paper indicates, I believe that what stands in urgent need of demythologizing is not the Bible itself, but rather, this legend about the alleged modern advances in Catholic magisterial teaching on biblical studies. In other words, we need to demythologize the demythologizers themselves.

Let me present the main elements in the Golden Legend, just as it is now told in nearly all our Church institutions. Throughout the Catholic world today, from the august echelons of the Pontifical Biblical Commission

right down to your humble teacher of Scripture at the level of college, high school, or parish adult education class, the venerable tradition — now thirty or forty years old — is faithfully handed on with scarcely a dissenting voice. One constantly reads and hears the same epic saga of darkness and light, replete with the same villains and the same heroes.

In the beginning (according to the Legend) the entire Catholic Church lay shrouded in the darkness of ignorance and confusion regarding the interpretation of her own sacred Books. That is, for a good eighteen or nineteen centuries after the foundation of the Church, nobody — not even the great saints, Fathers, Doctors and Popes — really understood the key to reading and interpreting the Bible correctly: all of them adopted unquestioningly what is now called a 'pre-critical' or even 'fundamentalist' approach to Scripture. The first glimmerings of light which began to shine in nineteenth-century Germany were rapidly extinguished by obscurantist Church leaders who were determined to perpetuate this long, 'pre-critical' night. Then came the Morning Star, in the person of Pope Leo XIII, who heralded the dawn of 'scientific' biblical enlightenment with his landmark encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (1893). This dawn was nonetheless delayed by further dark and chilly hours of oppressive reaction, thanks to the regrettable anti-modernist campaign launched by

authoritarian and benighted hierarchy, was freely advancing in leaps and bounds.

Finally, in 1943, the dawn finally arrived. The new Successor of Peter, Pope Pius XII, brought with him a joyous and liberating sunrise by promulgating his encyclical on Sacred Scripture, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which showed him, indeed, to be nothing less than a Great Revolutionary Leader, courageously determined to open doors for Catholic biblical scholars which his predecessors had kept firmly closed. Indeed, the main purpose of Pius XII's encyclical was to warn ultra-conservative Catholics of the need to be more open-minded and less suspicious toward the new insights of modern biblical criticism. Soon after his death in 1958, it is true, powerfully entrenched reactionaries (led by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani of the Holy Office) managed to eclipse the inexorably ascending sun for a few brief moments in a desperate, last-minute effort to haul the Catholic Church back into 'fundamentalist' darkness.⁴ At the same time, however, many intrepid, pioneering exegetes resisted these obscurantist measures and boldly ventured forth along the new biblical pathways opened up for them by the Great Leader, so as to score a stunning and decisive victory on November 18, 1965, at the Battle of Vatican II. On that day, the promulgation of the Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, ushered in the present era of perpetual noon-

day sunlight in which 'scientific' Catholic biblical scholarship will continue to bask irreversibly until Judgment Day (or whatever the demythologized version thereof turns out to be).

That, in its essential outlines, is what I am calling the Golden Legend. Of course, since I am employing the literary genre of satire in describing it thus, you should not attach to my words a slavishly literal and fundamentalist interpretation. However, I can assure you that any exaggeration of which I may be guilty is only slight. The prevailing outlook among our biblical scholars today — even at the highest and most prestigious levels — is indeed an emotional, polemical one which sees the history of Catholic Scripture studies over the last century in starkly black-and-white terms. The 'good guys' are the liberal, 'progressive' exegetes who promote that heterogeneous hotch-potch of rationalistic procedures and assump-

All public relations efforts are designed to attract and reassure potential visitors that they are going to experience heaven-on-earth.

Pope Pius X in the early years of this century. Forward-looking Catholic exegetes such as Fr. Joseph-Marie Lagrange, O.P., had to suffer a kind of martyrdom in those repressive years, during which the 'watchdog' Pontifical Biblical Commission — at that time functioning as an arm of the Magisterium — issued a series of decrees reinforcing outdated and pre-critical interpretations of the Bible. In 1920 Pope Benedict XV reinforced this negative and stifling atmosphere of vigilant suspicion towards biblical scholars by his Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitis*. The result of all this was that Catholic biblical progress was thereby arrested at a time when Protestant exegesis, untrammelled by the demands of an

tions which are commonly lumped together under the 'umbrella' title of 'the historical-critical method,' and which lead to the conclusion that a great many biblical passages traditionally understood to be truly historical are more or less mythical. The 'bad guys,' on the other hand, are the conservatives, the traditional or 'fundamentalist' Catholics who at every stage over the last century have refused to accept enlightenment from the new biblical experts, and who today continue to register their dissent from the modern consensus in publications like *The Wanderer*, *This Rock*, and the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*. The most prominent American exponent of the Golden Legend over the last thirty years has probably been Fr. Raymond E. Brown, member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and one of the pillars of the post-conciliar biblical establishment. He scathingly portrays 'pre-critical' Catholics as The Enemy in no uncertain terms, denouncing its representatives with epithets such as "right-wing vigilantes," "literalists," "ultra-rightists," and "fundamentalist editorial and column writers."⁵ He goes on to charge such critics with constituting "a danger for the continuing progress of Catholic biblical studies in this century," since they threaten "to frustrate the vision of Pius XII who may well prove to be the greatest Pope-theologian of the century."⁶

Similar criticisms have been made by another luminary in the post-conciliar biblical firmament, Fr. Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., Professor Emeritus of Sacred Scripture at the Catholic University of America, who goes so far as to openly criticize Pope Benedict XV for "insisting on [the] inerrancy" of Scripture.⁷ Indeed, there could surely be no more eloquent symptom of the malaise afflicting contemporary Catholic Scripture scholarship than the fact that a leading member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission can not only depict "insistence" on biblical inerrancy as being worthy of blame rather than praise, but can do so without apology or explanation, in the calm assumption that the great majority of his readers will agree with him. Indeed, the 1993 document of the Biblical Commission itself, while purporting to survey the whole 'state of the question' in Catholic biblical



studies a century after Pope Leo XIII's initial encyclical on Scripture, does not even mention inerrancy except, significantly, in the brief but sharply polemical section where it denounces "fundamentalism" as the greatest threat to progress in biblical studies today.⁸ Belief in biblical inerrancy is presented here as a typical characteristic of "fundamentalists."⁹

II. 1960: THE GOLDEN LEGEND MEETS MSGR. ANTONINO ROMEO

The portrayal of Pope Pius XII as a liberal or even "revolutionary" innovator in biblical matters is probably that aspect of the Golden Legend which stands in most urgent need of demythologization, for not only does it seriously distort the position of that great Pontiff; it is also the main key to the current respectability of the Legend as a whole. In order to see how this myth began

to take shape, we need to go back to the year 1960, when a fierce controversy over this point erupted at the very heart of the Church. Those who are familiar with the literature on Fatima will be aware that this year was specified by Our Lady in a locution to Sister Lucy in 1946 in connection with the famous 'Third Secret': Mary told the holy Portuguese nun that the secret should be made known by the year 1960; and when Sister Lucy asked her why it had to be that year in particular, the Blessed Mother replied simply that the situation would be 'clearer' then. Since 1960 actually turned out to be a relatively quiet year in terms of global events in the Church and the world, many of us have wondered why it was singled out in this prophecy. I would suggest, as a purely personal speculation, that perhaps at least one of the things Our Lady had in mind in predicting that something of critical importance would be seen 'more clearly' in the year 1960 was the series of events I am about to relate — events which have remained virtually unknown to all Catholics except a few specialists in the history of biblical studies. Their importance consists in the fact that they revealed (for those who had eyes to see) the grave extent to which radical, rationalistic biblical scholarship had already undermined the foundations of Catholic faith, thereby paving the way for the explosion of heresy and confusion

tions of the Golden Legend began to emerge, it was taking shape in the 'kerygmatic' form of preaching and oral tradition. Then, in the very midst of the citadel, — in Rome itself — just two years before Vatican Council II began, this developing tradition was boldly proclaimed in print. A 12-page article by Fr. Luis Alonso Schoekel, S.J., a Spanish exegete teaching at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, was published as the editorial for the September 3, 1960, issue of the prestigious Roman Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*. Entitled *Dove va l'esegesi cattolica?* ("Where is Catholic Exegesis Heading?"), Fr. Alonso's historic editorial noted the increasing diffusion of the new "broad" school of biblical scholarship supposedly promoted by Pope Pius XII in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, and, in answer to the question posed by the title, prophesied (quite accurately, as matters turned out) the increasing predominance of this "broad" school over the "narrow" or "conservative" school which was said to have been prevalent in Catholic exegesis prior to 1943.

It is noteworthy, of course, that Fr. Alonso's manifesto for the new biblical era did not appear until after the death (in 1958) of the supposedly liberal Pope in whose praise and honor it was published. Had there perhaps been some slight inkling, while Pius XII was still alive and active, that the Pontiff who had issued the encyclical

Humani Generis only a few years after *Divino Afflante Spiritu* might be less than enthusiastic about being depicted as the champion and prime instigator of the Church's "broadest" and most innovative trends in biblical scholarship? *Humani Generis*, after all, was quite the opposite of a 'liberal' encyclical: it was promulgated in 1950 by Pope

In order to see how this myth began to take shape, we need to go back to the year 1960, when a fierce controversy over this point erupted at the very heart of the Church.

which has devastated the Church in the last thirty-five years.

Already during the 1950s, the main outlines of the Golden Legend were already being diffused quietly by word of mouth throughout the Catholic world in 'progressive' seminary classrooms, professors' common-rooms, and Scripture seminars for 'forward-looking' students. To use the terminology which biblical critics apply to the New Testament, we could describe this process by saying that before the standard written redac-

Pius XII precisely in order to denounce dangerous and modernistic trends in recent theology and biblical exegesis. At any rate, all such caution on the part of the liberal elite was soon cast to the winds after the Pope's death; and what we might call the theological creativity of the exegetical community has continued to develop the primitive *kerygma* in the light of its post-Vatican II experience, to the point where today's 'canonical' forms of the Golden Legend freely and openly apply to *Divino Afflante Spiritu* the adjective which Fr. Alonso could

only hint at in 1960: Fr. Fitzmyer, in the 1990s, assures us that "Pius XII's encyclical . . . was, in fact, revolutionary."¹⁰

However, almost as soon as Fr. Alonso's original and less developed form of the Golden Legend came off the press, it was convincingly rebutted by a formidable Roman guardian of biblical orthodoxy who could see that, in spite of its diplomatic phraseology, Alonso's editorial was exploiting the name and authority of Pius XII in order to lay down the gauntlet openly to the whole bimillennial tradition of Catholic exegesis. This was Msgr. Antonino Romeo, a Scripture scholar who was at that time an official for the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities.¹¹ In his learned, eloquent and indignant reply to Fr. Alonso in the December 1960 issue of *Divinitas*, the theological journal published by Rome's Pontifical Lateran University,¹² Romeo had no difficulty in showing how flimsy was the historical evidence adduced by the young Biblical Institute professor in support of his thesis.

The most provocative claim put forward in Alonso Schoekel's editorial was that back in 1943, Pius XII himself "was very conscious of opening a new and wide door through which many novelties would be entering the precincts of Catholic exegesis — novelties that would have surprised excessively conservative minds."¹³ In order to buttress this claim, Alonso needed to find some "excessively conservative" pre-war biblical scholars whom he could point to as being somehow typical of officially approved and dominant trends in Catholic exegesis before the time of Pius XII. But to do this, as Romeo showed, he had resorted to caricaturing and taking out of context certain writings of three great biblical scholars of the earlier part of the century, Frs. Billot, Murillo, and Fonck.¹⁴ And, when it came to unearthing cases of specific biblical theses to which the Magisterium's previously 'closed' doors had now been 'opened' by virtue of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Alonso was unable to cite a single example! He mentioned belief in



the late authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes (i.e., centuries after the death of King Solomon¹⁵) as a thesis which, so he claimed, had only been gradually and cautiously admitted in the pre-war years; but, quite apart from the fact that even during the severest years of the anti-Modernist period, the Magisterium never censured this thesis, Romeo's superior erudition was able to cite ten more exegetes of the earlier period who openly sustained it, in addition to the two whom Alonso knew about and praised as isolated and daring pioneers.¹⁶ Alonso also hinted that one of the "novelties" now able to enter the exegetical door, thanks to *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, was permission to question the full and literal historicity of the Book of Judith. But again, Romeo pointed out that the literary genre of this book had long been recognized as obscure and debatable by approved Catholic authors before the time of Pius XII: already in

1933, the renowned biblical scholar G. Ricciotti "was able to write . . . with full ecclesiastical approval: 'Today scholars in every field agree on this as a minimum, that the Book of Judith makes no sense if we interpret it literally'."¹⁷

Romeo also gave a personal testimony, as one who had actually been at the Biblical Institute in Rome during the period when Alonso (decades later, and without any such experience) claimed Catholic exegetes had been held in submission and fear by Church authority. This claim was unfounded, said Romeo: "For the record, the present writer bears witness that, at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, prior to September 30, 1943, nobody was aware of this climate of fear and discouragement among exegetes."¹⁸ He recalled that at the time *Divino Afflante Spiritu* was published, nobody thought there was anything particularly 'liberating' or 'revolutionary' about it. (This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that Pius XII repeatedly insisted in the first part of the encyclical that he wished to confirm and reinforce all that his predecessors since Leo XIII had laid

Levie, S.J., had by the late 1950s become known as a decidedly 'progressive' biblical scholar and was severely criticized by Romeo in the 1960 article we are considering for his loose approach to the Bible's historical value. But in his own commentary on *Divino Afflante Spiritu* published in 1946, Levie made no claims that it was opening any hitherto closed doors — much less that Pius XII had consciously intended to open them.²¹

Msgr. Romeo's most powerful argument against Fr. Alonso Schoekel was his appeal to the most authoritative commentary on *Divino Afflante Spiritu* that ever has been published: an article by Father (later Cardinal) Augustin Bea which appeared in *La Civiltà Cattolica* back in 1943, in the same issue as the new papal encyclical itself. Bea was at that time the Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, and was in constant personal contact with Pope Pius XII by virtue of being his confessor. Moreover, it was an open secret in Rome that Bea was the main expert employed by the Pope in drafting the encyclical. Nobody, therefore, was in a better position than Fr. Bea to expound the Pope's meaning and intentions in that document; and the publication of his commentary together with the encyclical itself clearly indicated the Holy See's great confidence in his ability to explain it correctly. But, as Romeo pointed out in his own article seventeen years later, Bea's commentary gave not the slightest hint that Pius XII had any intention of

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down regarding Scripture studies.¹⁹ In response to Alonso Schoekel's version of recent history, Romeo wrote:

In 1943 nobody noticed any change of direction. The illuminating Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* continuously refers back to the glorious Tradition upon which Catholic exegesis always rested. When it encourages us to make further progress in exegetical science, it constantly points us to the way already traced out by previous exegetes and the resplendent example of the Fathers.²⁰

Even scholars who subsequently became a good deal more (or more openly) liberal in their exegesis were unable, in the period immediately after the promulgation of Pius XII's encyclical, to find anything in it which permitted what had hitherto been forbidden. Fr. Jean

"opening new doors" to biblical scholars which had been previously kept shut by his predecessors in the See of Peter. Quite the contrary: Bea commenced his article by insisting that Leo XIII's 1893 encyclical *Providentissimus*, the 50th anniversary of which was the occasion for Pius XII's new encyclical, "fixed for all time the fundamental lines of biblical studies in the Catholic Church."²² And in summing up his commentary, Bea described *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in equally conservative terms: "its doctrine will certainly enter into the series of those pontifical documents which will forever remain the guide and norm of biblical teaching."²³

In response to Msgr. Romeo's devastating critique of Fr. Alonso Schoekel, the professors of the Pontifical Biblical Institute closed ranks around their embattled colleague, making it clear that they considered their in-

stitution as a whole to be under fire. (At this time of nascent liberal resurgence after Pius XII's death, Romeo had indeed taken the opportunity to criticize not only Alonso, but also other exegetes, including two more professors of the Biblical Institute.) An article in Latin quickly appeared in the Institute's journal, *Verbum Dei*, 'signed' only by the initials of the Institute itself, and of less than a quarter the length of the *Divinitas* article to which it was replying.²⁵ It attempted no rebuttal whatever of Romeo's substantive arguments against Alonso's central thesis, namely, the attempt to rewrite history by driving a wedge between Pius XII's encyclical and all previous statements of the Magisterium on Sacred Scripture, while minimizing the gravity and continuing relevance of the same Pontiff's subsequent denunciation in *Humani Generis* of dangerous exegetical novelties.²⁵ Instead, the Biblical Institute professors opted for a response which proved to be a master stroke of public relations — one which effectively turned the tables on Romeo and helped to ensure that the Golden Legend would become set in concrete, as it were, as the Church's quasi-official version of the supposed progress being made in twentieth-century Catholic biblical studies. What the professors did was deflect attention away from Romeo's central arguments in order to present themselves as the victims of a gratuitous and obscurantist calumny. They singled out a number of quite secondary points on which their assailant had to some extent misinterpreted several of the writers he was criticizing, and insinuated that this was intentional and malicious. They also seized upon several passages in which Romeo had allowed himself to be somewhat carried away by indignation, to the point of making some accusations for which he could not provide documented proof.

The Biblical Institute found an easy target for ridicule, for instance, in an impassioned and seemingly exaggerated passage wherein Romeo made it clear that he regarded Alonso's article as merely the visible tip of a vast iceberg of exegetical modernism concealed in Catholic theological faculties throughout the world. He sweepingly denounced the whole of contemporary Catholic biblical scholarship as being 'white-anted' from within by a veritable conspiracy of dissent in high places. After recalling the alarm sounded in *Humani Generis* against tendencies which Pius XII declared were "threatening to subvert the foundations of Catholic doctrine," Romeo continued:

In Rome and throughout the world there is a whole hive of ceaseless activity on the part of termites toiling

away feverishly in the shadows. This compels us to intuit the active presence of a complete plan of trickery bent on disintegrating those doctrines which form and nourish the Catholic faith. An ever-increasing number of 'straws in the wind' coming from various quarters bears witness to the gradual unfolding of a broad and progressive plan of manipulation, under the extremely capable leadership of seemingly devout men, calculated to uproot Christianity as it has been known and lived for 19 centuries, in order to replace it by a Christianity of the "new age."²⁶

The Biblical Institute needed only to cite this 'purple passage' with an air of pained and sophisticated incredulity at Romeo's "apocalyptic vision"²⁷ in order to discredit him thoroughly in the eyes of many influential readers. After all, is it not one of the very elements of enlightened modernity to recognize anything savouring of 'right-wing conspiracy theories' as being self-evidently preposterous, and thus to be answered not with reasons and counter-argument, but simply with a knowing smile and a dismissive wave of the hand?

Nonetheless, whether or not the iceberg was as dangerous and malevolent as Romeo thought, the fact that an iceberg was indeed there beneath the surface was borne out by the response of the Biblical Institute professors themselves. After all, only two or three of them had been berated by Romeo; but the entire faculty of twenty or so evidently felt stung by his barbs and now rose up as one man to resist him. Indeed, their trump card was to present evidence that the great bulk of modern Catholic biblical scholars favored the trend denounced by Romeo — i.e., the appeal to Pius XII's encyclical on Scripture in order to justify ever 'broader' and less rigorous interpretations of the Bible's inerrancy and historicity — so that his indictment of a few really turned out to be an indictment of contemporary Catholic exegesis as a whole. After citing Romeo's 'conspiracy' passage, the professors commented to their readers: "You will justly be wondering, finally, whether there will be any contemporary exegetes left — going by . . . [Romeo's] criteria — who are *not* implicated in this deadly and practically diabolical conspiracy."²⁸ They then went on to give an impressive-looking list of the high ecclesial authorities, renowned Catholic institutions, respected biblical journals and professional groups of exegetes who had openly supported those works of the Jesuit professors Maximilian Zerwick and Jean Levie which Romeo was indicting as modernistic and unorthodox.²⁹

In short, Romeo's 'conspiracy theory' may not have been too far from the truth. The kind of slippery-slope exegesis denounced in *Humani Generis* had, it seems, continued to spread quietly among scholars during the 1950s, but had kept itself more or less out of print and out of sight while the severe and vigilant Pius XII remained at the helm of Peter's barque. When, soon after Pius XII's death, Msgr. Romeo and a few others³⁰ struck the tip of the iceberg, the great mass below began rising to the surface. This new emerging elite, on stretching, flexing its muscles, and taking note of its latent power, could now dispense itself from the difficult (if not impossible) task of answering scholars like Romeo with chapter and verse from Scripture and Magisterium, and felt free to "argue" with a simple show of strength: "We are everywhere! Take on one of us and you must take on all!"

III 1961-1968:

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOLDEN LEGEND

The immediate results of this 1960 clash between traditional and liberal schools of biblical scholarship at the centre of the Catholic Church seemed to constitute a victory for the former; however, it proved to be a very short-lived victory, as we shall now see. The conflict was immediately seen as a scandalous confrontation between two prestigious pontifical institutions — the Jesuit-directed Biblical Institute and the Lateran University. Nothing like this had occurred in living memory in the Eternal City, and the unseemly spectacle of two august Roman academies in a state of mortal combat soon attracted the attention of Pope John XXIII, who, in the Spring of 1961, instructed the Holy Office (under Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani) to intervene and adjudicate the dispute. While the case was being studied, a *Monitum* (warning) was issued by the Holy Office on June 20, 1961 against exegetical trends which called into question the historicity of the Gospels,³¹ and a few days later the French biblical scholar Jean Steinmann's book *La Vie de Jesus* — judged to be an example of such trends — was condemned and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books, with the express approval of Pope John.³² Then, in September of the same year, two of the Biblical Institute professors whom Msgr. Romeo had denounced in his famous article, Stanislaus Lyonnet and Maximilian Zerwick, were dismissed from their teaching positions by order of the Holy Office. Romeo had accused them too of undermining the historicity of the

Gospels: Zerwick, for example, had asserted in a seminar for Italian Scripture teachers that Christ's promises to Peter in Matthew 16: 18-19 ("Thou art Peter, and upon this rock . . .") are "the work of the evangelist, who places on the lips of Jesus a fictitious phrase."³³ (Fr. Malachi Martin, who at that time was a colleague of Zerwick at the Biblical Institute, has also told me of his clear recollections of Zerwick in private conversation dismissing as 'mythical' St. Matthew's accounts in his Infancy Narrative of the visit of the Magi, Herod's slaughter of the Innocents, and so on.)

In the light of these magisterial warnings and disciplinary measures in 1961, it looked as if the Vatican's "fundamentalists" (as Fr. Raymond Brown calls them) had won the day. However, Pope Paul VI, soon after his election in June 1963, initiated a course of action which — whether he consciously willed it or not — was to result in a practical reversal of this situation. As Cardinal Montini of Milan, he had gone on record shortly before Vatican II with statements which, in the light of the subsequent explosion of dissent which was to surface immediately after the Council, proved to be very naive. He had affirmed, for instance, that the whole Catholic Church, on the eve of the imminent Ecumenical Council, found itself serenely united in faith and was untroubled by internal disputes or heresies of any kind. In regard to the particular controversy we have been examining, Pope Paul, in line with his optimistic outlook, was evidently swayed by the plea that Romeo and another traditional exegete from Rome's Lateran University, Msgr. Francesco Spadafora,³⁴ had calumniated the Biblical Institute professors in their published accusations. Accordingly, during his first visit as Pope to the Lateran University, on 31 October 1963, he publicly delivered a stinging rebuke to these conservative professors, accusing them of having engaged in "jealous rivalry" and "vexatious polemics," and warning them never to repeat such behaviour.³⁵ Not long after that, the Pope removed from office the Rector of the Lateran University, Msgr. Antonio Piolanti, who, as editor of *Divinitas*, had strongly backed up the accusations made in that journal by Romeo and Spadafora. Then, in March 1964, Paul VI received in audience the new Rector of the Biblical Institute, the Canadian Fr. Roderick MacKenzie, S.J., who pleaded with him to re-open the case of his two fellow-Jesuit professors whom Cardinal Ottaviani had fired from their teaching positions.

With spontaneous sympathy for MacKenzie's assurances that Lyonnet and Zerwick were the innocent victims of reactionary prejudice, Paul VI agreed to have



their case re-examined by a commission of Cardinals led by the former rector of the Biblical Institute, Cardinal Bea. The result was that the two Jesuit professors were reinstated and began teaching again in the Fall semester of 1964. This re-investigation was evidently carried out in great secrecy. Of the select group of Cardinals who in 1964 composed the Pontifical Biblical Commission (which at that time was still an organ of the Magisterium), the only member still living is Cardinal Franz Koenig, retired Archbishop of Vienna. He informed me last year that not only was he not consulted about the re-investigation; he knew nothing whatever about it until he read its result in the newspaper. And in 1995 I asked Msgr. Spadafora, one of the principal 'witnesses for the prosecution' in the original 1961 Holy Office proceedings against the two professors, whether he was consulted again during Cardinal Bea's re-exami-

nation of the case three years later. He replied that he too knew nothing about this re-investigation until its results were made public.

The effects of this reinstatement, recommended by Bea and authorized by Paul VI, were momentous: with the advantage of hindsight we can see that they did much to ensure the firm entrenchment in the Catholic academy of liberal, rationalistic, biblical scholarship, along with the Golden Legend that gives respectability to that school of exegesis. As Cardinal Koenig commented to me in a letter, "The reestablishment of the two Jesuits, Lyonnet and Zerwick, caused much astonishment at that time and was understood by witnesses that Paul VI did not agree with the decisions of the Holy Office."³⁶ Indeed, this was one of a number of humiliations which its Prefect, Cardinal Ottaviani, had to endure during the years of Vatican II.³⁷

It is not that Paul VI himself had any sympathy for radical criticism of the Gospels. On the contrary, in my doctoral thesis, which was approved last January and is at this moment in process of being published in Rome, I have shown that, like all his prede-

cessors (and successors) in the See of Peter, Paul VI clearly and constantly upheld the integral historicity of the Gospels — including those passages which are most frequently demythologized by 'establishment' exegetes — in hundreds of documents and speeches. Indeed, my research has revealed that the Pope reaffirmed no less than 52 times, from beginning to end of his fifteen-year pontificate, the historicity of Our Lord's promises to St. Peter as recorded in Matthew 16: 17-19.

Why, then, did he reinstate Fr. Zerwick, who had publicly described those promises as "fiction," as a teacher at the Church's most vital and prestigious institution for biblical studies — and without even requiring from Zerwick any public retraction? We may have to wait until around the middle of next century, when the relevant Holy Office records are finally opened up for study,³⁸ before further light can be shed on that very

big question. But in general terms, we can say that this case presents further evidence of the enigmatic, paradoxical character of Paul VI's pontificate. In accord with those very promises to Peter, whose authenticity was being called in question, Pope Paul's official magisterial teaching always expressed the orthodox apostolic faith; but his practical, administrative decisions — and at times his indecision — often seemed to have the effect of allowing that faith to be compromised. As I have said in one of the conclusions to my doctoral thesis:

One could say . . . that Paul VI's consciously chosen strategy for dealing with the threat of false doctrine — in biblical studies as well as in other sacred sciences — was practically the opposite of President Theodore Roosevelt's famous dictum to the effect that, in foreign relations, the United States should "speak softly, but carry a big stick." Pope Paul, in contrast, gave the impression of striving to compensate for leniency in disciplinary action by a redoubled frequency and urgency in speech.

It appears that there were in fact certain conditions attached to the return of the two Jesuit professors to their teaching positions: as I have shown in my thesis, they did not thereafter teach or publish material dealing with those areas of biblical studies wherein their views had clashed with the judgment of the Holy Office. However, none of this was ever announced publicly; and the *de facto* message sent out to Catholic biblical scholars round the world in the summer of 1964 was simply that actions speak louder than words. It was understood that from then on, regardless of what the Magisterium might say on paper in regard to biblical interpretation, Catholic exegetes could in practice feel free to promote whatever critical exegetical theories they liked without having to fear any disciplinary action. After more than thirty years this situation still prevails: while a number of dogmatic and moral theologians have been warned and/or disciplined by Rome in recent decades (Hans Kung, Edward Schillebeeckx, Charles Curran, Leonardo Boff, Tissa Balasuriya, for example), not a single professional exegete, to my knowledge, has been removed from his/her teaching position, even though radical biblical exegesis has nearly always provided important premises for the conclusions drawn by the dissident moralists and dogmatic theologians.

Another factor in the triumph of the Golden Legend was the even more catastrophic defeat suffered by Cardinal Ottaviani and the Holy Office in November 1962, when the initial conciliar schema on "The

Sources of Revelation," (Scripture and Tradition), which had been prepared under Ottaviani's supervision, was decisively rejected by the Fathers of Vatican Council II. Among other things, the schema explicitly affirmed the complete inerrancy of Scripture and the historical truth of the Infancy and Resurrection narratives in the Gospels, severely reprimanding anyone who should "dare" to minimize the historicity of Jesus' words and deeds as reported in any part of the four Gospels. Over 60 percent of the Council Fathers voted against this document after listening for several days to some of the Church's most learned and prestigious prelates — Cardinal Bea above all — excoriating the schema for its alleged negativity and suspicion towards modern exegesis, its excessively 'scholastic' and 'un-pastoral' tone, its ecumenical insensitivity, and of course, its failure to incorporate the new and liberating insights supposedly contained in Pius XII's encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. This, in spite of the fact that the schema not only referred repeatedly to *DAS*, but even cited precisely that supposedly 'liberating' or 'revolutionary' passage of the encyclical which has provided the main pretext for those who have been spinning the Golden Legend: the passage, that is, where Pius XII speaks of the importance of correctly identifying the respective literary forms of different parts of Scripture.³⁹ After the rejection of this original draft on Divine Revelation, the schema that replaced it went through several revisions during the remaining three years of Vatican Council II, and, thanks to the vigilance and insistence of some of the more strongly traditional Fathers during that process, the version finally approved and promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965 — the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* — actually reincorporated the main points which the liberals had objected to in the original schema, although now in a more indirect and less explicit form. Instead of being plainly and prominently asserted in the main text of the document, the unlimited inerrancy of Scripture and the historical character of the Infancy and Resurrection narratives now emerge as teachings reaffirmed by Vatican Council II only when one takes into account the 'fine print': that is, the footnotes and official explanations of amendments to the text given by the Council Fathers by spokesmen for the Theological Commission. These explanations, in any case, have generally been inaccessible to 99 percent of the Catholic faithful: many of them have never been translated into vernacular languages, and the only places where you can be sure of unearthing

them are theological libraries big enough to contain the 27 huge tomes containing the complete proceedings of the Council, all in Latin.

We could therefore say that in the Vatican II documents Pope Paul VI and the Council Fathers in effect opted for the policy of reaffirming a number of vital but controversial doctrinal points only in a subtle and barely audible whisper, rather than trumpeting them loud and clear. And this, I would suggest, has proved to be a public relations disaster for Catholic orthodoxy in an age of mass communications, when we are increasingly conditioned to assimilate information only when it reaches us in the most blatant and un-subtle ways — hurled at us in the form of pre-digested and repetitious slogans and sound-bites from newspaper headlines and TV and computer screens rich in decibels and living colour.

The purveyors of the Golden Legend, who, like all Catholic liberals, could always count on the support of the secular media, were quick to take advantage of the situation. By ignoring the Council's fine print in *Dei Verbum*, and by quoting very selectively Pope Pius XII's encyclical, they were so successful in dominating public opinion regarding Catholic biblical studies, that within three years of the Council they had even penetrated the ranks of papal speech-writers. In one allocution to a congress of Old Testament scholars in 1968, Paul VI made the same pseudo-historical assertion that Fr. Luis Alonso Schoekel had made eight years earlier, in the editorial which provoked the indignant reaction of Msgr. Antonino Romeo. The Pope said: "You all know that Our predecessor Pius XII had opened the way widely to researchers in his encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of 30 September 1943." Evidently, Romeo's account of twentieth-century papal teaching on Scripture had by this time been relegated to the dustbin. Excellent history it was, but, at a distance of more than thirty-five years, we can see now, more clearly than ever, that, practically before its ink was dry, it was history written by a loser.

Finally, after our historical excursus attempting to summarize the process by which liberal Catholic biblical scholarship has come to control and dominate the scene, I will conclude by asking — and answering very briefly — what, after all, is *wrong* with the Golden Legend? What are the fallacies in this version of our recent history that need to be demythologized? After all, I am maintaining, along with Msgr. Romeo, that Pope Pius

XII's alleged opening of exegetical doors which had been closed by his predecessors is purely legendary. But if this is so, how is it that the legend has managed to masquerade for so long, and with such dazzling success, as historical fact? Surely the Pope must have said something in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* which has at least provided a pretext for the kinds of interpretations which I am criticizing? I have dealt with this question, among others, in an article appearing in the Spring 1997 issue of *Faith & Reason* quarterly,⁴⁰ and will not try to reproduce here everything contained in my article. What follows is a brief resume of some of the main points:

Myth No. 1 maintains that, from the beginning of this century up until 1943, the Magisterium adopted a closed, negative, and suspicious approach to all biblical scholars, so that exegetes were kept in constant fear of censorship by oppressive and obscurantist Vatican authorities. The reality, however, is that, of all the thousands of learned Catholic books and articles on Scripture published in this forty-year period, only four books and two articles were formally condemned by the Holy Office or the Biblical Commission. This seems a very modest tally of victims for a supposed Reign of Terror against biblical scholars. We have the testimony of biblical scholars such as Romeo who were around at the time, and who affirmed that it was not true that exegetes in general were living in fear of being silenced or censored by Roman authorities. The reality is that there was, no doubt, a minority of crypto-liberal scholars who *did* feel oppressed, and who subsequently read back into that period their own gripes as being the dominant feeling among all exegetes at that time.

Myth No. 2 asserts that Pope Pius XII's principal motivation in publishing *Divino afflante Spiritu* was to warn the Church of the dire threat posed by ultra-conservative Catholics who were rejecting (liberal) biblical criticism in favour of a fundamentalist approach to Scripture. What is the reality? The fact is that Pius XII's encyclical makes one single remark to the effect that Catholics should not automatically reject everything new in biblical scholarship simply because it is new. Now, when we research the background to that brief comment, we find that the Pope had in mind there a single, lone priest, a certain Fr. Dolindo Ruotolo, practically unknown outside Italy, who had caused a few moments of controversy back in 1941, by circulating a 'traditionalist' pamphlet denouncing the alleged modernism of current biblical studies. But Fr. Ruotolo's ideas were so extreme that they were not in line with au-

thentic tradition at all. For instance, he condemned the modern study of, and emphasis on, the original languages of Scripture, Greek and Hebrew, because, according to his interpretation of the Council of Trent, the Latin Vulgate edition was already the most perfect possible version of the Bible. This very extreme and quite erroneous position was what Pius XII had in mind in making the aforesaid comment. But in more recent times, the late Fr. Raymond Brown and other establishment exegetes have been quoting that sentence in order to castigate anyone who criticizes their own exegesis on these matters, in publications like *The Wanderer*, *Culture Wars*, *This Rock*, *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, and *Faith & Reason*.

Myth No. 3 assures that while previous Popes had refused to allow exegetes to recognize various differing literary genres in Scripture, insisting that everything in Scripture had to be interpreted literally, Pius XII reversed this reactionary policy and insisted on a correct identification of the Bible's literary forms. The fact is that long before Pius XII's time the Magisterium had permitted a good deal of speculation about the literary genres of biblical books, and all Pius XII did was to state more explicitly certain principles which had long been recognized in practice.

Myth No. 4 tells us that, thanks to Pius XII's recognition of the Bible's different literary genres, and Vatican II's teaching on the same subject, Catholic exegetes are now entitled to hold that parts of the four Gospels are to be understood as imaginative or symbolic literature of some sort, rather than true history. The fact is that neither Pius XII nor Vatican II gave any justification whatever for this opinion, which represents an abuse, rather than a legitimate application, of the Church's teaching on biblical literary genres.

Finally, Myth No. 5 assures us that Vatican II restricts the inerrancy of Scripture to certain themes or elements which are "put into the Bible for the sake of our salvation." The fact is that, as the official explanations and footnotes — the 'fine print' — make clear, no such restriction is intended. I have argued in my doctoral thesis that the published English translations of *Dei Verbum* are actually rather misleading, and that an accurate translation would make it clear that what the Council really means is that *everything* in the Bible is there "for the sake of our salvation," and that everything the writ-

ers affirm is necessarily free from error by virtue of its simultaneous divine authorship. I will read for you the best-known English translation of this passage, and then my own suggested translation, for which I have argued in great detail in my doctoral thesis. The first is that found in the Flannery edition, and also used, unfortunately, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#107): "Since all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures." That is ambiguous to a certain extent: one does not know whether we are being told that all, or only some, of the Bible, is there for the sake of our salvation, and consequently guaranteed to be free from error.

My own suggested translation is as follows: "Since all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must in consequence acknowledge that the Books of the Bible teach the truth firmly, faithfully, and without error — keeping in mind that it was for the sake of our salvation that God wanted this truth recorded in the form of Sacred Scripture."

Nearly thirty years after the triumph of the Golden Legend, it still reigns virtually unchallenged, in spite of its manifest misrepresentation of Church documents. Are there signs of hope? Yes, there are. It seems to me a remarkable sign of the Holy Spirit's protection of the Church that, in spite of the prevailing rationalism and scepticism in biblical studies, the magisterial documents of John Paul II, like those of his predecessors, continue to uphold the historical truth and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. So does the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in its copious references to the Gospels and other biblical books.⁴¹ Many times in the past the Church's faith has been assailed from within. But the Rock of Peter, on which our Lord founded the Church, will always prevail. And please God, we will live to see the day, in the new millennium, when that false version of the Church's teaching which I have been criticizing in this essay will be not only recognized as a legend, but will be safely dead and buried.

This article is adapted from a lecture given recently to the 'Christifideles' group in New Jersey. A tape recording of that lecture, with the title "Demythologizing the Golden Legend," can be obtained from Keep The Faith, 10 Audrey Place, PO Box 10544, Fairfield, NJ 07004.

NOTES

¹ cf. *Dei Verbum*, 11.

² *Dei Verbum*, 19.

³ Many or most Catholics will associate the word 'fundamentalist' with a conservative Protestant and anti-Catholic reading of the Bible. In recent years, however, the purveyors of the Golden Legend have shown no hesitation in applying this pejorative epithet to Catholics who uphold the traditional teaching of their Church on the inspiration, historicity and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. See for instance J.A. Fitzmyer, S.J., (ed.), *The Biblical Commission's Document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church": Text and Commentary* (Rome, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993). He refers to Karl Keating's apologetic work as an example of a new trend which he finds disturbing and describes as follows: "Unfortunately, Catholics in recent times have been developing their own form of fundamentalist reading of the Bible" (*op. cit.*, p. 107, and cf. n. 143 to that page).

⁴ In a well-known presentation of the Golden Legend, another leading post-conciliar exegete, Fr. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., speaks of the "biblical criticism adopted by Pius XII," and of certain prominent exegetes "(e.g., David Stanley and Stanislaus Lyonnet) . . . who suffered greatly in the abortive fundamentalist attempts around 1960 to reject that criticism" (*The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*, New York, Paulist Press, 1973, p. 6).

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁷ Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 20, n. 10.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 101-108, with the text and commentary for Section I (F) of the PBC document, entitled "Fundamentalist Interpretation."

⁹ In this document, the nearest approach to a profession of belief in biblical inerrancy on the part of the Biblical Commission itself carefully avoids actually making such a profession. Notice the curious wording of the following concession: "Fundamentalism is right to insist on *the divine inspiration of the Bible, the inerrancy of the Word of God* and other biblical truths . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 104, emphasis added). Would we not expect a shorter and more natural form of wording to be used here by those who assent to the doctrine that "*everything* affirmed by the inspired authors . . . must be held as affirmed by the Holy Spirit," as Vatican II insists in

Dei Verbum, 11? Why distinguish in this context between "the Bible" and "the Word of God" — especially since the "fundamentalists" whose views are supposedly being reported in this sentence would certainly not do so? That is, why not say simply, "Fundamentalism is right to insist on *the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible* and other biblical truths . . ." Why not indeed? — unless one is reluctant to concede that Fundamentalism "is right" when it expresses its doctrine in that form. But why should there be any such reluctance, unless one holds the view — incompatible with the Catholic faith — that not everything written in the Bible is really "the Word of God"?

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ This has since been renamed the Congregation for Catholic Education.

¹² A. Romeo, "L'Enciclica 'Divino afflante Spiritu' e le 'Opiniones Novae'", *Divinitas* 4 (1960), pp. 387-456.

¹³ "... *si rese ben conto di aprire una nuova ed ampia porta, e che attraverso di essa sarebbero entrate nel recinto dell'esegesi cattolica molte novità, che avrebbero sorpreso gli animi eccessivamente conservatori*" (L. Alonso Schekel, "Dove Va L'Esegesi Cattolica?" [*La Civiltà Cattolica*, III, quad. 2645, 3 September 1960] p. 456).

¹⁴ cf. Alonso, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-453 and Romeo, *op. cit.*, pp. 397-404.

¹⁵ The book begins (1:1) with a description of the author as "the Preacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem." The general scholarly opinion has long been that this would have been understood as a literary device by its original intended readership, and that the doctrine and language of the book mark it as post-exilic in origin, i.e., at least half a millennium after the time of Solomon.

¹⁶ Cf. Alonso, *op. cit.*, p. 454 and Romeo, *op. cit.*, p. 405, especially n. 45.

¹⁷ Cf. Alonso, *op. cit.*, p. 457 and Romeo, *op. cit.*, pp. 434-435, n. 113.

¹⁸ Romeo, *op. cit.*, p. 393, n. 13.

¹⁹ Cf. *Enchiridion Biblicum* (EB) 539-545.

²⁰ Romeo, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

²¹ Cf. J. Levie, "L'Encyclique sur les études Bibliques," Part I (*Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, Vol. 68, No. 6, Oct. 1946) pp. 655-657 and Part II (Vol. 68, No. 7, Nov.-Dec. 1946) pp. 781-782.

²² "... *fissa per sempre le linee fondamentali dello studio biblico nella Chiesa cattolica*" (A. Bea, "L'Enciclica 'Divino afflante Spiritu'" [*La Civiltà Cattolica*, No. IV, quad. 2242, 10 November 1943] p. 212).

²³ "... entrare certamente nella serie dei quei documenti pontifici, che rimarranno per sempre guida e norma dell'insegnamento biblico" (*ibid.*, p. 224).

²⁴ Cf. article bearing the initials "P.I.B.," entitled "Pontificium Institutum Biblicum et Recens Libellus R.mi D.ni A. Romeo" (*Verbum Domini*, 39 [1961] pp. 3-17).

²⁵ Cf. Pius XII, encyclical *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950), *EB* 612-613, 618.

²⁶ Romeo, *op. cit.*, p. 454.

²⁷ "... apocalypticam visionem" "P.I.B.," *op. cit.*, p. 14. (On p. 15 the passage from Romeo's article cited over n. 26 above is reproduced.)

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15, emphasis in original.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ These included notably Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, Prefect of the Holy Office, Cardinals Ruffini and Pizzardo of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and Msgr. Francesco Spadafora, another Lateran University Scripture professor who at that time was one of Ottaviani's trusted advisors for the Holy Office. Until he died in March 1997, Spadafora never ceased to challenge openly and aggressively the prevailing post-conciliar liberalism in Catholic biblical scholarship, especially in Italy's self-styled "anti-modernist" periodical *Si Si No No*.

³¹ Cf. *EB* 634.

³² Cf. *EB* 635.

³³ "... l'opera dell'evangelista, che mette nella bocca di Ges. una frase fittizia" (M. Zerwick, *Critica letteraria del N.T. nell'esegesi cattolica dei Vangeli* [Conferenze tenute al Convegno Biblico di Padova 15-17 settembre 1959], S. Giorgio Canavese, 1959, p. 5). Zerwick conceded only that this alleged fiction invented by Matthew (or by an anonymous redactor of the Gospel) was at least in harmony with other things Jesus really did say on other occasions.

³⁴ Cf. above, n. 30.

³⁵ "gelosa concorrenza ... fastidiosa polemica" (*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 1963, p. 272).

³⁶ Letter to B.W. Harrison, March 29, 1996.

³⁷ Like many churchmen at the time, Cardinal Bea — according to information given me by two priests who knew him well, Msgr. Francesco Spadafora and Fr. Malachi Martin — became decidedly more 'progressive' in outlook during the years between the death of Pius XII and the celebration of Vatican II. This, it seems, was partly because of a sense of solidarity with his fellow-Je-

suits, who were becoming increasingly liberal at that time, and partly because he was personally captivated by Pope John's joyous vision of a 'new Pentecost' to be achieved by the Council through 'openness,' *aggiornamento* (up-dating), dialogue with the world, and above all, ecumenism. Fr. Martin's estimation is that Bea, trained in the traditional Jesuit school of strict Ignatian obedience, consciously strove to adapt his own outlook to that of the successive Pontiffs he was called to serve.

³⁸ In March 1996 I requested permission from the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to have access to the documents of the Lyonnet-Zerwick case, for purposes of my doctoral research. I was informed that this would not be possible, since none of the records of the Holy Office since the pontificate of Pope St. Pius X (i.e., since 1914) are open as yet for the inspection of scholars.

³⁹ Referring to that passage in note 9, article 13 of the rejected schema affirmed: "... what the author really intended to signify by what he wrote is very often not correctly understood unless due attention is paid to those customary local modes of thinking, speaking and narrating which were current at the time the sacred writers lived. (... *id quod auctor scribendo reapse significare voluit, si pius non recte intellegitur, nisi rite attendatur ad suetos nativos cogitandi, dicendi vel narrandi modos, qui tempore hagiographorum vigeant*") (*Acta Synodalia* I, III, 18-19).

⁴⁰ "The Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitis* in its Historical Context" (*Living Tradition* 60 [Sept. 1995] pp. 1-11 and 61 [Nov. 1995] pp. 1-18; republished in *Faith & Reason* 23 [Spring 1997] pp. 23-88).

⁴¹ Indeed, Fr. David Coffey of the Catholic Institute of Sydney has complained that "the uncritical use of Scripture in Vatican II, which has been the object of scholarly comment, is continued in the Catechism" ("Faith in the Creator God," in A. Murray [ed.], *The New Catechism: Analysis and Commentary* [Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1994], p. 14). The "scholarly comment" referred to by Fr. Coffey is given as being that of Fr. Raymond Brown, "Scripture and Dogma Today," *America*, 157 (31 October 1987), p. 287. It is refreshing to see moments of honesty such as this in the writings of the liberal theological establishment: seldom will it admit candidly to being in conflict with the teaching of Vatican II.